

I want to note a special problem with one potential loser under the bill. It shifts some funds that are currently allocated to Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is not represented in this body. Without an advocate of its own to force attention to the Commonwealth's concerns, it is important that we all carefully consider the impact legislation can have upon Puerto Rico and its residents. When we address universal service, we should not take steps that might inadvertently reduce the availability and affordability of telephone and telecommunications services to the residents of Puerto Rico.

In conclusion, I want to again thank the Commerce Committee for focusing greater attention on the future of universal service. I look forward to working with Senators on the committee and others concerned about universal service for rural residents, low-income consumers and our schools and libraries to lay the groundwork for legislation to reform and strengthen the universal service system.

HEALTHY FORESTS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, last week, we passed an amended version of H.R. 1904, the Healthy Forests Act.

While this bill is not everything I hoped it would be, it is an improvement over what was proposed by the President and passed by the House. The devastating fires in California and throughout the West over the past few years have added great urgency to the need to remove dangerous fuel loads from many of our forests. We need to treat those hazards now, and this bill is really the only relevant legislation that can pass Congress and be signed into law by the President this year. That is why I voted for the bill on final passage.

During the floor debate, I offered an amendment to strengthen the underlying bill's old-growth protections and I also voted for a number of other amendments. It is unfortunate that these amendments were not accepted because they would have reassured a greater portion of our citizens of the real intent of the legislation and would have made it more effective.

We don't have the funding we need to remove all the dangerous fuel loads in our forests. We should have made more funding available and ensured more resources were focused on the wildland urban interface that presents the greatest risk to property and to the lives of our firefighters and citizens.

While the underlying bill will increase authorization levels for fuel reduction activities, it does not guarantee this money will be made available. We should have passed Senator BINGAMAN's amendment that would have guaranteed the funding and stopped the raiding of fuel reduction accounts to pay for fire suppression.

Likewise, the Senate bill is an improvement over the House legislation in directing at least 50 percent of the

work be conducted in the wildland urban interface, but we should have strengthened this directive by passing Senator BOXER's amendment that would have raised wildland/urban interface work to 70 percent.

Lastly, the underlying bill made an earnest attempt to provide some protection for old-growth stands in our national forests. Unfortunately, the bill leaves a couple of significant loopholes that, if abused by our forest managers, could threaten these ancient trees. That is why I offered an amendment to close these loopholes and better protect old-growth stands. Unfortunately, my amendment was defeated.

Now that the Senate has spoken on the overall bill, the House should take up this legislation and pass it unaltered. The President should drop his opposition to the increased spending associated in the bill and urge its quick passage by the House. The President's opposition to increased spending presents a real and tangible risk to every community looking to treat forests surrounding their homes, schools, and businesses.

If this bill is signed into law, the burden will shift to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to implement the programs in the most responsible and effective manner possible.

Again, they will need to focus on protecting communities. It will be unacceptable to treat forest stands far from human population while any community's wildland/urban interface remains untreated.

They need to focus on taking out of the forests the materials that truly threaten to generate catastrophic wildfires. We should not see large, fire resistant trees being removed from our forests under the guise of "healthy forests." Any old-growth stands that are treated need to be treated in ways that protect their unique ecosystems.

Finally, in a fiscally responsible manner, the agencies need to maximize the positive economic influence these fuel reduction projects can have on our rural economies. This means not only hiring local workers and companies to conduct the work, but also looking for opportunities to use the resulting material for other economic enterprises.

The bill passed by the Senate has the potential to truly work in a manner nearly everyone can accept. Alteration by the House or poor implementation by the agencies will only threaten our wildfire endangered communities.

I am committed to making this legislation work and stand ready to assist the communities in Washington State protect their families and homes.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, a bill that would add new cat-

egories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

On July 7 of last year, three gay friends were violently beaten by a 21-year-old man in Tampa, FL. The man later pled guilty to charges of aggravated battery and battery with evidence of prejudice. The victims were approached in a parking garage shortly after leaving a party at the Florida Aquarium, one event in a 6-day gay pride celebration. Sadly, one of the victims had to visit the dentist more than twenty times to replace teeth lost in the beating.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak as we have just concluded Breast Cancer Awareness Month. During October, about 16,000 more women heard the news all women dread, "You have breast cancer." That is over 190,000 women this year. Among women between 35 and 54 years of age, no disease claims more lives. In more personal terms, an American woman faces a one in nine chance of sitting down and hearing those words from her physician. At that moment everything changes.

We can be thankful that more women are surviving this diagnosis. Modern treatments and early detection are saving lives. Many of my colleagues have joined with me in supporting research into better diagnosis and treatment. Just last month, we learned of a new drug treatment which substantially reduced the recurrence of breast cancer. We have made great strides, and I am grateful to the many researchers who fight long hours battling this disease. And we sometimes forget the men and women who, while suffering the effects of breast cancer, have volunteered in these studies, at a time when they are already going through such a struggle. We owe all of them our gratitude for the strides we have made in fighting this disease.

Despite this progress, one in every five women diagnosed still will not survive breast cancer. Modern treatments are useless without a diagnosis. With early detection and treatment, death and injury can be so greatly reduced. I call on American women today to take the initiative. Many women have been taught to do self-exams, and while they can help, they are no substitute for a mammogram. I urge you now to ask your physician about a mammogram. Mammograms saves lives.

But maybe you have put it off: you can't miss work, or the kids have an